

MINUTES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

Tuesday, November 10, 2009
Council Chambers
Municipal Building
93 Cottage Street
Bar Harbor, Maine
2:00 PM

I. Call to Order

Members present: Patricia Samuel, Chair; Barry Teater, Secretary; Matt Horton, James Houghton (Howdy), Chris Fogg, Karen Baksa, Randy Sprague.
Staff present: Anne Krieg, Town Planning Director.

II. Excused Absences

Chris Vincenty, John Kelly, Mark Hanscome.

III. Minutes

Ms. Samuel suggested three changes to the minutes of the October 27 Task Force meeting, both relating to her update on telecommunication projects (Item F, page 3). First, her statement that the phone company has upgraded DSL service so that “all” customers can get service in Bar Harbor should be changed to “more” customers. Second, the statement that the Town is exploring the idea of building a town-wide fiber optic cable system should be corrected to indicate that the Communications Task Force discussed the idea. Third, it should be noted that a survey is needed to determine who in the town has any kind of access to high-speed Internet service.

Mr. Houghton moved to accept the minutes as amended, and Mr. Sprague seconded the motion. The Task Force approved the motion unanimously.

IV. Regular Business

A. Economic Development Plan – update of progress

Ms. Krieg said that the Town’s hired consultants, Mark Eyerman and Charles Lawton of Planning Decisions, Inc., continue to work on the economic develop plan and that Brian Madigan has been assigned to finish the business space inventory begun by town intern Lauren Suerth. Ms. Samuel suggested that the Task Force expand a previously begun list of the types of businesses the town wants to attract.

B. Update of Downtown development district project

Ms. Krieg said she would present the latest Land Use Ordinance (LUO) and zoning map revisions to the Task Force at its next meeting for discussion and a vote. She recommended retaining language in the latest draft of the LUO that eases parking requirements in the downtown districts, and the Task Force supported her position, agreeing that parking relief would encourage downtown development and business retention.

Ms. Samuel is scheduled to report on the Task Force's LUO work at a December 15 check-in meeting with the Town Council. Mr. Fogg urged Task Force members to attend the meeting to support Ms. Samuel.

C. Update of Eden Street Corridor Zoning Project

The Task Force tabled this discussion.

D. Discussion of employee housing issues

Mr. Sprague noted that quality employee housing is an economic development issue for the town. Yet, Ms. Krieg noted, residents of certain residential areas such as West Street are concerned about having multiple seasonal workers living in one house in their neighborhood. The key issue is where in the town employee housing should be allowed. Ms. Samuel suggested that seasonal employee housing could be defined and regulated in the table of permitted uses in the LUO.

E. Update of Route 3 committee

Mr. Horton reported that the Route 3 committee's effort to secure state and federal funding for road improvements is fluid but that he was optimistic about the Town's prospects, despite the highly political nature of highway funding. After being told by U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe's office that \$15 million in federal earmarks was potentially available for the project, subsequent communication with the office indicated that only \$400,000 was available. Mr. Horton said the Route 3 committee will continue to press the state's congressional delegation and the Maine Department of Transportation for funding. If funded, the road improvements would likely be done in two phases, Mr. Horton said. Phase I would encompass work from College of the Atlantic to the CAT ferry terminal, and phase II would extend from the ferry terminal to Ireson's Hill.

F. Update on telecommunications projects

Ms. Samuel said she would present a report on telecommunications projects at the next Task Force meeting.

G. Other Task Force comments

Mr. Sprague reported that The Tides bed and breakfast on West Street has been purchased and that the new owner intends to convert the structure into a family residence. This is at least the fourth such conversion in recent months, noted Mr. Houghton, who suggested the trend be monitored.

The Task Force continued a previous discussion of the Town's requirement that citizen complaints about code violations cannot be filed anonymously. The practice has a chilling effect on some citizens' willingness to file complaints, for fear of retribution. Some of those complaints are about serious code violations that could threaten public health and safety, Mr. Horton noted. Such violations could also damage the town's public image if complaints are not filed and addressed, Mr. Fogg noted. Everyone agreed that while the issue is important, it is beyond the Task Force's purview and should be referred to the Town Council for discussion and possible action. Mr. Sprague agreed to write a memo to the Council suggesting the issue be discussed. The Task Force will review and revise the memo at its next meeting before sending it to the Council.

Mr. Horton expressed concern about the Town's lack of influence in the policy decisions and affairs of Acadia National Park. While Park employees have seats on several Town boards and influence Town affairs, the Town has little representation in Park affairs such as recent policies on cell tower placement and over-flights by sightseeing planes.

Mr. Horton suggested a need to ease Town regulations on businesses. He said the Task Force should compile a list of ordinance-related obstacles that business owners frequently complain about, and then address those obstacles. He cited parking restrictions, signage permits and building height limitations as examples. Mr. Teater suggested that the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce informally poll its members for common complaints. Ms. Krieg suggested holding a town workshop at which business owners could bring their complaints, and their ideas for addressing them, for one-on-one conversations with her.

V. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

VI. Matters for Next Meetings

- Review of a memo to Town Council about Code Enforcement complaints.
- Update of telecommunications projects by Ms. Samuel.
- Review of the latest Land Use Ordinance and district maps.
- Expand the list of the types of businesses the Town would like to recruit and retain.

VII. Confirm Date/Time/Location for Next Meeting

Ms. Krieg confirmed that the Task Force would meet again on November 24, 2009, at 2 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Horton moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Sprague seconded the motion. The Task Force voted unanimously to approve the motion. (Mr. Fogg and Mr. Houghton did not vote because they left the meeting prior to the motion.)

These minutes were prepared by Task Force Secretary Barry Teater for presentation at the November 24, 2009, Economic Development Task Force Meeting.

Barry Teater, Secretary

Date